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Scenes at the Redding Conference, April 7, attended by over 100 land trust and Nature Conservancy members as well as representatives of conservation commissions, Audubon societies and other organizations.

Pix by Elemer Kardos



BETTERMENTS BILL CLEARS LEGISLATURE

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CONservaTION

By Thomas A. Gaines
Chairman, Conn. Chapter

A natural area is a land or water unit where natural conditions are maintained or encouraged insofar as possible. Natural conditions result from allowing ordinary physical and biological processes to operate with a minimum of human intervention. So says the Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Management of Nature Conservancy natural areas in Connecticut, even though open to the public, has concentrated on operating with a "minimum of human intervention." This has been done by volunteer caretaker (preserve) committees, the most vital component of the preserve management system.

Members of these committees guide visitors through preserves, post the land, inspect it regularly for abuses such as firebuilding, littering, dumping and cutting. They keep an eye on possible zoning changes which might affect the preserve. They stay in touch with the state office to advise of problems. And they prepare a report which describes ecological changes, number of visits and uses for scientific and educational purposes.

NEW PHASE

The Conservancy is now entering a new phase in which the above information will be expanded and reorganized. The whole management process will be placed on a higher level of sophistication. It is made possible by the establishment of the National Registry of Ecosystem Preserves, a cooperative effort by The Conservancy and the Smithsonian. This data bank will collect and keep available information supplied by management committees.

To accomplish this, preserve committees will be asked to prepare a master plan. A guide will be available shortly to help in gathering the facts. Much information can be found on maps already in use, including topographic, soils, geologic, aquatic, climatic and species identification.

Preserve objectives will be established where this has not been done already. For example, a mountain bog with relict

colonies of the last glaciation has for its primary preserve objectives;

A. To protect and preserve the native flora and fauna.

B. To develop man's understanding of the natural world through educational and scientific endeavors.

USE CATEGORY

As of November, 1972, the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) recognized natural areas as a bona fide land use classification. This permits SCS field offices (one in each county in Connecticut) to make available to the preserve committees free technical guidance in such areas as wildlife management, soil science, biology, forestry, plant communities, geology and much more.

How this new approach to land management will be implemented by The Conservancy will be described through regional meetings in the state. These will be attended by the Chapter's preserve management committee member in each region and caretaker committee members of preserves in that region. The first such meeting for the larger preserves in Fairfield County took place in May guided by a representative from the management department at the national office in Arlington, Virginia.

Circuit Riders

Speeches and more speeches, to groups large and small help spread word of The Nature Conservancy throughout Connecticut.

Chairman Thomas A. Gaines' recent speeches were at a public hearing of the State General Assembly's finance committee, at the Redding Conference held by TNC and the Land Trusts and to the Litchfield Land Trust.

Vice Chairman Mary Anne Guitar spoke to the Unitarian Church in Ridgefield, the Garden Club of Redding, the Farmington Land Trust, the Friends of the Library in Brookfield and the New York Horticultural Society.

G. William DeSousa, the immediate past chairman, gave talks recently to the East Haven Rotary Club and at the Foxon Congregational Church in East Haven, expounding to both groups on the importance of TNC.

Dr. Richard Goodwin addressed the East Haddam Rotary Club. Dr. William Niering delivered the TNC message to the Essex Garden Club and the Wetlands

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Committee in Portland. Clifford E. Emanuelson, our man at Devil's Den, spoke to the Easton League of Women Voters, in Westport at the Bedford Elementary School, to the Easton Volunteer Fire Company and the Norfield Garden Club in Weston.

Remind your local organizations, whether Kiwanis, church, Rotary or garden, that a speaker, usually with accompanying slides, is available from the Connecticut Conservancy for their schedule of programs. The Chapter also has a portable exhibit which can be set up at meetings concerned with ecology or the environment.

HOW-TO GUIDE

The Chapter office has a new State Procedures manual. It was prepared as a supplement to that of the national office, as an effort to clarify what must be done, and how to do it, for incoming officers and trustees.

Its seven pages succinctly sum up such operational procedures as the acquisition of land by gift, revolving funds or with governmental cooperation. It also outlines land management operations and such on-going duties as those of the treasurer and the secretary as well as membership and public relations activities.

Farmington River Watershed Association Inc.

Note:

This page is given over to the Farmington River Watershed Association Inc. as part of a series to acquaint Conservancy members with valuable sister organizations.

WE NEED

WATERSHED ASSOCIATIONS

Political boundaries such as state, county and town lines fail to recognize the needs of resource planning and management. The River flows from its source in Beckett, Massachusetts to where it enters the Connecticut River without any regard for mayors, selectmen, conservation commissions or the effectiveness of town ordinances regarding its quality or flooding. It grudgingly accepts what is discharged into it and welcomes the increasing non-consumptive uses such as canoeing and fishing. Adjoining wetlands and needed open space often straddles 2 town lines requiring similar regulations or simultaneous acquisition if maximum benefits are to be realized.

In Connecticut, as in all of the other states, the land area can be divided into drainages or watersheds. Each surrounds a major stream and includes all the lands which drain into that stream. A watershed can be further subdivided into smaller units as they relate to the tributaries of the major stream. The Farmington River Watershed for example contains 602 square miles within 26 towns of Connecticut and Massachusetts. Major subdivisions are Salmon Brook, the Pequabuck River, the East Branch, Still and Mad Rivers and the Clam River.

FARMINGTON PLAN

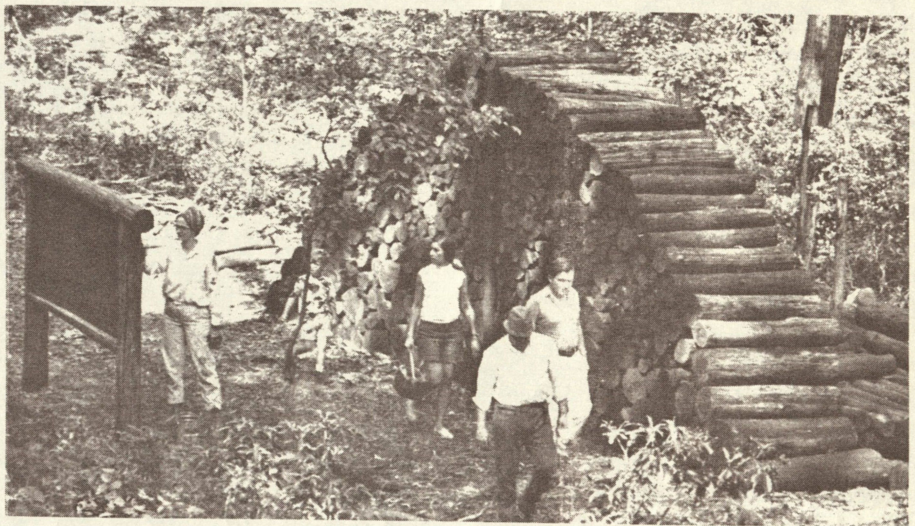
Looking back over 20 years of service in

the Valley to its residents, industry and municipalities, one can see why watershed associations are needed. Early efforts of FRWA were directed towards persuading towns and industries to correct water pollution practices in the Farmington River. Stimulation of favorable public opinion also led to the smooth passage of the 1967 Clean Waters Act. Additional water management programs have included a jointly sponsored \$400,000.00 design change to Colebrook Dam, creating the first multi-purpose reservoir with managed environmental characteristics in New England, and the publishing of an authoritative study of flood protection measures and recommended town action.

SPREADING THE WORD

Public awareness and the placement of values on natural resources can only be accomplished through the educational process. This has been done through comprehensive studies such as *Water*

Resource Planning Study of the Farmington Valley, 1965, by the Travelers Research Center, Inc., sponsored jointly by the Connecticut Water Resources Commission and FRWA. The publication of guides to the River and to open space such as the Shade Swamp. The preparation of school materials and the conducting of formal forums have been additional sources of information. This has been a balanced effort to meet both the needs of the people and the ever changing pressures upon their natural resources. More recently the organization has concerned itself, in cooperation with the Valley towns, with the development of a comprehensive oil spill plan which meets the criteria of the Department of Environmental Protection. Towns, proceeding as separate governmental units would find such an undertaking to be difficult, repetitious and impossible to frequently update as the need arises.



New educational, historical display at Devil's Den, the Conservancy preserve in Weston, of a charcoal burner's site. Funds for the exhibit were contributed by the Weston Historical Society.

The Nature Conservancy, 151 Brookdale Rd.
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Membership Classes

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS:

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Sponsor*	\$500	Family	\$15
Guarantor	\$100	Subscribing	\$10
Supporting	\$50	Junior (18)	\$5

LIFE MEMBERSHIP \$300
* (Includes Life Membership)

Akeley Preserve

Scientific Report

Note: This is the second in a series reporting on scientific inventories of Connecticut Conservancy preserves.

The Akeley Nature Preserve covers eight acres of swamp in Mystic. It adjoins the Peace Sanctuary Nature Preserve which is supervised by the Thames Science Center. The preserves, on the west bank of the Mystic River, were established by the late Mrs. Mary L. Jobe Akeley.

The Akeley Preserve is swamp forest of red maple and yellow birch located in the coastal lowlands of southeastern Connecticut.

The soil, developed from the overlying glacial deposits, is predominantly non-stratified and non-sorted materials having a complete range in grain size but very little clay. The soil is covered by a layer of mulch and leaf litter. The climate is characterized by cold winters and warm, humid summers. During the winter temperatures frequently fall below freezing and during the summer range into the nineties. The average annual temp. is 49.5 degrees F. Snowfall averages 40 inches annually. The average length of the growing season is 192 days, and rainfall averages 47.1 inches per year.

The community is dominated by Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), with some Yellow Birch (*Betula Lutea*), Alder (*Alnus* sp.), Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis Virginiana*), and Black Gum (*Nyssa Sylvatica*). The shrub layer consists of Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), and Sweet Pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*), with Spicebush (*Lindera Benzoin*) and Brier (*Smilax rotundifolia*). The herb layer contains



Wood Duck Swamp, a five acre Conservancy wildlife refuge in Greenwich.

pix by Elemer Kardos

Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*), Nodding Trillium (*Trillium cernuum*), and Cinnamon Fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*), with other minor herbs making up the balance.

From "An Inventory of the Vascular Plants at the Peace Sanctuary Nature Preserve, Mystic, Connecticut, by John F. Gardner, 1969, Thames Science Center, Inc., New London, Connecticut.

BETTERMENTS BILL

Both the State Assembly and the State Senate have passed the "Betterments Bill" supported by The Conservancy and Land Trusts throughout the state. The bill exempts natural areas open to the public, yet owned by private, non-profit organizations, from taxes for improvements, such as sewers or water lines for which such preserves have no need or

value. Towns in Connecticut have traditionally exempted privately held, open-to-the-public nature preserves from real estate taxes, on application, but no such exemption has existed for "improvements". With the spreading urbanization of the state, such taxes have been a constant monetary menace to the preservation of natural areas.

The Redding Conference held last April 7, saw over 100 representatives of Land Trusts, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Commissions, Audubon societies and other organizations gather together to discuss joint problems. The meeting voted unanimous support for the "Betterments Bill", and pledged to mobilize their memberships across the state in support of such a bill. Its passage demonstrates the importance of organized support for environmental issues.



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